CHRISTIAN ETHICS.[1]

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OF the five works whose title pages are given below three claim to be Christian, and are such in truth. The other two claim to be scientific, and do not proceed upon the assumption of the truth of Christianity and the consequent validity of its ethical teaching. The little work by Dr. Kilpatrick, very attractive in its make-up, clear and well ordered in thought, and wholesome in teaching, aims to be, not a scientific treatise, but a practical manual, especially for the young. It is a thoroughly good book. It seems a little strange that the author, at this late day, should have represented the baptism of infants as not less obligatory for all Christian parents than is common honesty. He does not recognize the possibility of error in this article of his faith, or, apparently, that others than those of his faith may ever read his book.

The *Christliche Ethik*, by Köstlin, is the ripe fruit of thought and investigation extending through a life now far advanced in years. From 1862 to 1896 he gave regular courses of lectures upon ethics and made large contributions to the press in the same and similar

[1] *A System of Ethics.* By FRIEDRICH PAULSEN, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Berlin. Edited and translated with the author's sanction from the fourth revised and enlarged edition by Frank Thilly, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Missouri. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899. Pp. xviii + 724. $3, *net.*

The Ethical Problem. Three Lectures on Ethics as a Science. By DR. PAUL CARUS. Second edition, enlarged by a discussion of the subject by William M. Salter, John Maddock, F. M. Holland, Professor Friedrich Jodl, Dr. R. Lewins, Professor H. Höffding, Professor L. M. Billia, with replies by the author. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1899. Pp. 352. $0.50.

Christian Character — A Study in New Testament Morality. By REV. THOMAS KILPATRICK, D.D., Minister of the Free Church of Scotland at Ferryhill, Aberdeen. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899; New York: Imported by Charles Scribner's Sons. Pp. xii + 298. 2s. 6d.

La Morale chrétienne. Par A. GRETILLAT, professeur de théologie à la faculté indépendante de Neuchâtel. Deux Tomes. Neuchâtel: Altinger Frères, 1898, 1899. Tome I, pp. viii + 564; Tome II, pp. 562. Fr. 17.

Christliche Ethik. Von JULIUS KÖSTLIN, Dr. theol., jur. et phil., Professor und Oberkonsistorialrat in Halle. Berlin: Verlag von Reuther & Reichard, 1899. Pp. viii + 699. M. 10; bound, M. 12.

lines. Since 1896 he has given himself wholly to the composition and publication of this work. The wish which as a youth he expressed to a friend he has thus been spared to realize in a ripe and rich old age. The work is everywhere vital with a childlike, manly, rational faith in the living God as revealed in his works, his Word, his Son, and his spiritual children, and the open-minded, open-hearted reader cannot escape the contagion of this pervading tonic spirit. At the same time the scientific spirit is equally dominant. The work is far enough from a practical homily. There is nowhere in it so much as a tinge of the sermon style. The traditional German passion for exact and exhaustive analysis, systematization, and exposition has way and sway. To some readers, no doubt, this will be a special charm, and indeed every intelligent reader will rejoice at once in the thorough analysis and the orderly exposition, but a certain refinement of systematization, leading to frequent repetitions of familiar truths, and constant references back and forward to complementary elements of a particular discussion, while excellent for completeness, yet for the ordinary reader tends somewhat to weariness. And any other than a German of the old school would be willing to forgive the honored and beloved author if his style had been a trifle more simple and direct, if he had made his sentences, as a rule, less cumbrously complex and elongated. But even in style Köstlin is obviously wholly himself. There is nothing artificial. And then he always states his thought with clearness and exactness.

Of Gretillat's work all that holds true in respect to tone, spirit, and "substance of doctrine" which has just been said of Köstlin's. In it the reader meets everywhere, misses nowhere, the mind and heart of the great Master who is the source of Christian morals and ethics, and in whose

"life the law appears
Drawn out in living characters."

This work is the last great division of the author's *Exposé de théologie systématique*. While engaged in its final revision for the press, at the end of the Introduction, on January 14, 1894, his pen was arrested by the hand of death. His colleagues, with loving affection for him and a profound sense of the great value of the treatise, edited it for the press. So careful and thorough had been the author's previous revision that their work was limited to a faithful transcription of the original manuscript, with occasional condensations and curtailments, and the omission of certain technical terms. We may thus be confident that we have, unmarred, the mature results of the

distinguished author's ethical labors. While his preceding theologica volumes are presupposed by this and are its foundation, he has so conceived of ethics as to make it a complete whole and to require but few references to his preceding works. His colleagues, the editors, speak with just admiration of his unusually analytic and systematic talent, and his happy faculty of clean, clear exposition. We are charmed with the characteristically French elegance of structure, while the strength and thoroughness of the discussion would do credit to a typical German. One joins heartily in the prayer of the editors that "God will bless to very many the reading of these pages, written by a man of faith who aimed at nothing else than the glory of his Master."

Paulsen's *System of Ethics*, translated by Professor Thilly, makes a goodly volume, pleasing to the eye. It is "done" into idiomatic and readable English, whose faithfulness to the original is guaranteed by the name of the translator. "To diminish the size of the translation" some parts of the original have been omitted. These are the discussion of the duel and the *Umriss einer Staats- und Gesellschaftslehre.* In his preface the translator expresses his conviction that "of all the treatises on ethics that have appeared in recent years none is so admirably fitted [as this] for introducing the beginner to this study." It has indeed the charm of an easy popular style; it is everywhere concerned with the interests and business of the present life; it discusses many important subjects with freshness, force, and success. Its meaning is almost always clear. It has marked excellencies. It is said by those who are acquainted with Dr. Paulsen's religious attitude that he identifies himself earnestly with the party of Christian reform and progress. One ought to read his work in the light of this fact in order to get at his probable meaning in some cases. But even then one cannot well see how he can escape the charge of misrepresenting the ethical teachings of the New Testament and of advocating principles inconsistent with true Christian ethics.

The three lectures of Dr. Carus on *The Ethical Problem* are scarcely more satisfactory from a Christian point of view.

In the space remaining it may be of use to notice briefly some of the fundamental ethical principles to which all these volumes direct attention, and so to estimate emerging harmonies, diversities, and conflicts.

All alike recognize the close connection of psychology and ethics, and the importance of a clear and thorough knowledge of the former in arriving at a safe theory of the latter. Ethical study must start

from facts of consciousness, and the more perfect the knowledge of the conscious self in which these facts appear, the more easy and certain their interpretation as related to the moral life. They also agree in regarding ethics as a normative science. It is a practical science in the sense that it is a science of human conduct or practice, but it is not enough to investigate human conduct so far as to learn its general characteristics and then formulate these. Its primary duty is to ascertain beyond this what is that law which is known distinctively as the moral law to which human conduct ought to be conformed — the law, not of fact, but of obligation, of duty, of right, righteousness, holiness, and true human life. Such a law is recognized by the consciousness of men generally and by the science which undertakes to interpret this moral consciousness adequately.

The fact of a conscience in mankind has also recognition by scientists generally, including the five with whom we have here to do. These five, however, are not quite at one in the use of the term "conscience." In some cases it is regarded simply as an activity; in others, as the self in so far as constituted for such activity — in one case a complex phenomenon; in the other the substantial basis of the phenomenon. If the question arises whether it is a faculty, it of course cannot be called a faculty if it is regarded as being only an activity. Otherwise it might be a faculty and also an activity or phenomenon. The name "conscience" might designate, now the conscious activity, and now the conscious being as constituted for that activity. If the activity is so distinctive, so in kind unlike all other conscious activities, as not to be simply either a form of some other or a complex of others, the term "faculty of conscience" would be justified on the same ground as the term "faculty of memory," or, in general, of intellect or will. No one holds that it is merely a form or element of self-consciousness, for self-consciousness is an immediate knowledge of the present phenomena or activities of the conscious self as mere facts, including the phenomena of conscience, while conscience respects conscious experience, actual or possible, past, present, or future, and also the moral law of that experience and its application to the experience. Dr. Carus objects vehemently to theological ethics that it makes the conscience something supernatural or magical. Gretillat in his discussion of conscience may at times seem to countenance this view, but a fair estimate of his language gives rather the result that, like theologians generally, he regards the conscience, whether as activity or faculty, as purely and exclusively human, and as

supernatural in no other sense than personality is supernatural. The terms "nature" and "natural" have many meanings, and one may so juggle with them as to deceive both oneself and others.

These five writers agree in rejecting the empty formalism of Kant—a moral law without ground or reason; an obligation or duty without content; a course of conduct not finding its supreme reason, and hence law, in the supreme end of all human conduct and living. If intuitionism is to mean such formalism, they are not intuitionists; they are teleologists. They do not believe that the supreme end of any and every rational choice is just that choice, or even less than the total choice, just a single quality of it. Quality, indeed! What quality save irrationality could be in such a choice? Or, rather, how is such a choice either possible or conceivable? But every clear-thinking moralist must recognize an intuitional element in morals. Whatever constitutes the supreme moral end, and so furnishes the moral law, must, if recognized at all as moral, be so recognized intuitively. The ideas of right, obligation, duty, cannot come into the human mind save immediately, or intuitively, on occasion of the requisite condition, the presentation of the conditioning object or relations. They then arise necessarily, as do the other ultimate ideas, in presence of their conditioning percepts. If the origin of our ultimate ideas is to be found in human nature, or the human constitution, then may they be called the voice of nature, and if we recognize God as the Author of this nature, then may they also be called the voice of God. Either expression is a figure of speech, and to understand it otherwise is to misunderstand it. Whoever dimly or clearly conceives of a supreme end or value as depending upon his own choices and conduct will infallibly have either dimly or clearly the sense of a supreme law binding him to realize that end—the sense of right, obligation, duty, and whatever else these ideas necessarily imply and involve.

There is a quite general agreement that one of the things necessarily implied and involved in the idea of obligation is the idea of a freedom of the person's will, and in the fact of obligation, the fact of a freedom of the will, or a freedom of the person as having will. But what is this freedom, whether as idea or fact? As to this Paulsen is very clear and full in his answer, and Carus equally clear, but less full. Carus scouts the notion "that a man can will differently from what he wills." He maintains that a motive is strictly a cause, and determines the will. He says: "The cause that sets the will into motion we call a motive." "A will not determined by a motive is as nonsensical [*sic*]

as an effect not produced through a cause." We must distinguish, he says, between necessity and compulsion. Man acts always by necessity, but not always by compulsion. When the necessity is inward, arising from the personal nature in view of ends, it is freedom, and of no other freedom is or can man be conscious or possessed. No sense, forsooth, in the conception that a man can will differently from what he does will, that he could have willed differently from what he in fact has willed, that he will hereafter be able to will differently from what he will will! So then a motive is also a motor, and man is not self-determining in his action, but is a self with a nature originally determined by something else than this self, and is forever after necessarily determined by this nature in itself and its constituted relations to the not-self. To this Paulsen seems to agree. The others deny. They assume and assert that the idea of personal, moral choice involves the idea of alternative power, and hence of proper origination, authorship, and ownership; and hence of obligation, responsibility, virtue, vice, character, and of reward or penalty in their strict meaning. Wisely, they refrain from any attempt to justify this view otherwise than by an appeal to the facts of consciousness and their necessary implication. They condemn the effort to resolve into illusion the most decisive affirmations of the conscious spirit and to set up in opposition to a primary affirmation of rational consciousness a deduction from impertinent premises. Paulsen maintains that my self-consciousness only testifies to the fact that the influences determining my life are in part my wishes, inclinations, convictions, and resolutions, in part from within, not wholly from without. He admits that there is some ground for the objection that each man is ultimately what God or nature made him. But he denies that this frees the man from blame, for, says he, "our judgment of the worth of a being depends upon what he is, not upon how he became so." He says also that "God or nature cannot shirk the responsibility for their creations," and "if a good and beautiful human life is a credit to God, a worthless and disgraceful life is doubtless to his discredit." This seems to imply that a bad man should be judged as we judge a savage beast, and *vice versa*. He, however, later draws the distinction that "animals are moved by momentary impulses and perceptions," while man "determines himself by *ideas of ends*." But he fails to show that any man has it in his power to have at any given moment any other ideas than those which he does have. The ideas determine all his action. What determines the ideas? Dr. Paulsen, of course, recognizes human freedom, but it does not appear

that his *principles* recognize it. We are hardly surprised to hear him say: "I shall attempt to justify the evil [*i. e.*, *moral* evil, not simply the liability to sin, but the sin itself] in the world." Sin is good as the necessary condition of holiness, perhaps [not in angels and God, but certainly in men. Even the crucifixion of Christ was a *felix culpa*. This is bad ethics, and will breed bad morals. It certainly is no worse than the doctrine which makes God's executive will the proper cause of all human actions, and whatever will truly justify the one theory will serve the same purpose for the other. But such a theology and its consequent ethics never did and never can have place in a development of life and thought which is soundly Christian and truly human.

As all ethical writers recognize the fact that ethics is a normative science, they all undertake to find that standard or law to which all human conduct *ought to* conform, and what it is in the law or standard that gives it this supreme, absolute authority for conduct. It is not enough to give us a science of what human conduct is. That might come under anthropology. They must give us the science of what conduct ought to be. That alone is ethics. And this science must have in it a large element of philosophy. In attempting to answer the question, What is the moral standard, and what the ground of its authority? ethical writers part company and conflicting theories emerge. It is needless to say that our three works on Christian ethics do what every genuinely Christian ethics must: they hold to a theological basis of the moral law and its authority. Dr. Carus says that the "ethical ideal rises, as [do] all other ideals, from the wants of man." And these wants are discovered and made known by science. Paulsen says: "The authority of duty springs from the relation of the will to custom, or, what amounts to the same, of the individual to society." And so we have as the definition of conscience, "*the consciousness of custom*, or *the existence of custom in the consciousness of the individual*." This, however, is a conscience in process of formation, beyond which, in the case of moral heroes such as was Jesus, there is developed an "individual" conscience, the individual in some way coming to have an ideal of his own, transcending all known custom and enabling him to realize a "subjective morality." This ideal may be, so far as appears, an absolute one, by which all "custom" should be judged—may, in short, be the ideal involved in the conception of the Christian's God, and the standard according to which God rules the world and will at the last judge it. Now, if in fact there is in existence such a God, revealing himself to men and in them, recognized by them; if Jesus

was not utterly deluded in his assurance that such a being was his Father, and that his Father's will was to him an inward law of life, so that to do that will was his meat and his drink, then was the morality of Jesus profoundly "objective," since it found its law in that Being on whom all other beings depend. And why shall we not recognize in the most perfectly developed conscience and morality the *true human* conscience and morality? Besides, if one will look carefully into the phenomena of conscience in children and in the most perverse or undeveloped forms of adult morality, it will appear that the moral law for them is not what is the custom or the requirements of other men, be they parents or the nation or the entire race, but rather that unseen, absolute, supreme being and will which, it may be, is sometimes regarded as represented more or less adequately in such custom or requirement. And as to the view of Dr. Carus, that the moral law must be discovered scientifically by discovering man's needs, and that its ground is just these discovered needs, he of course must recognize that these needs have their ground in the nature of mankind as it is in itself and in its total relation to all other beings, and that, if there is any ground to this nature and relationship, the ultimate ground of the law must be in that which is the ultimate ground of this nature and relationship. If, on the whole, the most reasonable theory is that of the existence of a divine, rational, personal mind and will—personal in the highest sense, and rational mind and will in the highest sense; both in the absolute sense, making all finite existence and relationship dependent upon the same—then will the discovery of man's highest wants, *i. e.*, his highest *needs*, by scientific investigation, carry Dr. Carus to the Christian theory of the moral law and its ground. Its ultimate ground is the nature of God, its proximate ground the nature of man as the image of God, its expression every revelation of the divine will touching man's conduct, that will being the expression of the divine nature. And why should it be thought a thing incredible—why, especially, should an evolutionist think it a thing incredible—that in the human mind universally there should be some kind and degree of recognition of the personal God? He belongs to our environment, no thing and no one more so, for, as Paul said, "in him we live and move and have our being." So if by environment the evolution of human life is determined, the presence of this part of our environment should issue in a religious nature, with a sense of absolute dependence, of the need of worship, and of subjection to the divine will as our absolute law. And conversely, if we everywhere find in

developed man such a sense, we ought, on the doctrine of the evolutionist, to find in that fact the evidence of the personal God as the determining source of that sense.

In his historical sketch of the more significant forms of ethical teaching, Dr. Paulsen first gives a sympathetic and interesting exposition of the Greek conception, and follows this with a chapter on the Christian conception, which he puts in the sharpest contrast with the Greek. Were it not for his reported affiliation with Christian work and workers, one could not resist the conviction of his utter want of sympathy with the whole New Testament doctrine of life as he conceives, or rather misconceives, at least misrepresents, it. He characterizes it as surcharged with contempt for learning, for the natural virtues of courage and justice, for the civic and military virtues, for art, wealth, and honor, and as advocating on the one hand a flexible and yielding good-will, and on the other an uncompromising, invincible defiance of whatever is hostile to itself. He refers, in a note, to the fact that his exposition has been criticised by others as "representing Christianity as a weak, meek, world-weary, down-trodden, ascetic affair," and says that is not the impression that he intended to create. It is exactly the impression that the chapter naturally and necessarily does and will make. Dr. Paulsen does not recognize the strictly historical character of the New Testament, being a disciple of Strauss. It is, in his view, an expression of the conceptions of the writers in historical terms. This view of the book, and also his interpretation of the book on any view of it, are alike objectionable. To the true, natural, normal life of man, physical, social, intellectual; to the rounded, complete development of the whole man, the New Testament, rightly understood, is not antagonistic; quite the opposite; and in a system of ethics intended especially as a text-book for the young such a chapter cannot but be harmful.